United Way Centraide Canada

2013

User Guide

Focus Area Frameworks

Draft Edition

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Table of Contents

The Purpose of the User Guide 5
Connecting the Dots: 2003-2013 7
Overview 7
1. Setting Your Aspirational Goal: The Community We Want 11
2. Choosing Key Outcomes: The Change We Can Make Together 12
3. Developing a Case for Action: Why We Need to Act 16
4. Developing an Action Plan: We're Committed to Act and We've Got a Plan that Can Work 18
Frequently Asked Questions 23
- Choosing Key Outcomes 23
- Developing A Case For Action 24
- Developing An Action Plan 25
- Developing A Reflection And Reporting Plan 26

About United Way Centraide

Having evolved from our roots as a fundraising organization, United Way Centraide (UWC) is a critical community convener that mobilizes local and national partners - including business, labour, community leaders, government and community residents - to create opportunities for a better life for everyone in our communities.

Not all community members have an equal opportunity to create a vibrant life. Many struggle to achieve a sustainable livelihood because they have vulnerabilities that place them at risk and face barriers in accessing opportunities and support. Recognizing this, UWCs choose to focus their efforts on individuals and groups in our communities that are vulnerable to a variety of social and systemic barriers. Priority populations in a community vary according to local circumstances, but often include people dealing with or at risk of poverty, abuse, or stigmatization related to race, country of origin, culture, disability or sexual orientation.

Our community impact mission is to improve lives and build community by engaging individuals and mobilizing collective action. Community impact is about achieving meaningful, long-term improvements to quality of life in Canadian communities, by addressing not just the symptoms of problems but also getting at the root causes. UWC inspires people to come together to make a lasting difference in our communities.

UWCs achieve sustainable positive community change by engaging, inspiring and mobilizing the community's capacity to give, volunteer and act. UWCs use an asset-based approach to community development, building on existing strengths and resources in the community to foster sustainable positive change.

UWCs are able to use their position as funders, convenors, collaborators, researchers, and partners to help communities establish priorities for change at the local level. This local strength is leveraged by the ability to work with other UWCs locally, regionally, and nationally to understand and to seek solutions to these challenges.

All UWCs, individually and collectively, are working together for real change to happen. We do this by:

- Engaging and mobilizing community (dollars, influence, time, knowledge)
- Strengthening the network of services and capacity of non-profits and community
- Influencing public attitudes, systems, and policy
- Understanding and addressing underlying causes

By combining community engagement with priority-setting and collective action, we are achieving lasting, measurable change together.

The Purpose of the User Guide

The Focus Area Frameworks serve to deepen our common understanding and support the development of a shared vision for our Brand Focus Areas. Each Focus Area Framework articulates a vision statement and the aspirational goals we seek to advance as a UWC Movement – both locally and collectively. This Focus Area User Guide is intended to help you use the three frameworks as you and your community find ways to move people from Poverty to Possibility, to ensure the children and youth grow up to be All That Kids Can Be, and to ensure you help build Strong Communities.

The Frameworks serve to bring clarity and understanding to the often complex social issues that underpin our focus areas, and illustrate the type of strategies and contributions UWCs, along with our partners, seek to make to advance our aspirational goals. This guide is intended to highlight the ways in which the Focus Areas Frameworks can be useful to you at a local level as you work to advance the UWC mission.

The Focus Area Frameworks are not intended to impose or prescribe the action and strategies of local UWCs. Local action must reflect the specific priorities, assets and context of each community. However, these Frameworks are intended to represent a foundation upon which the UWC Movement can:

- Better align our communication and marketing strategies locally and nationally in order to accent our focus on community impact;
- Improve our donor stewardship, especially with regional and national partners, and position UWC as a partner of choice for corporate and individual donors;
- Create opportunities for collaborative action; and
- Deepen our capacity as UWCs to advance community impact.

The Focus Area Frameworks are not intended to be static documents. As our collective experience and knowledge of each focus area evolves, so too must our definition of and approach to each focus area. Through this current work we have made some adjustments to the focus area wording found in the Brand Framework. These changes demonstrate the evolving nature of our work and how it is articulated. These Frameworks are intended to be one part of a larger Focus Area Action Plan that seeks to contribute to and help the Movement address the following critical business needs:

- Create a shared understanding and vision for each focus area;
- Better align our communication and marketing strategies to accent our social change orientation;
- Improve donor stewardship and retention, and position UWC as a partner of choice for corporate and individual donor giving strategies; and

- Deepen our capacity as UWCs to advance community impact collaboratively as a Movement and with external partners.

As part of this plan United Way Centraide Canada (UWCC) will also be creating processes and tools to advance the following outcomes:

- The Movement will have an agreed upon data collection process in place for the focus areas;
- The Movement will have common communication tools to support consistent national and local communication with the public and donors for each focus area; and
- The Movement will have strengthened its expertise and knowledge in each focus area through effective knowledge exchange practices and tools.

What Expectations do the Frameworks Place on Local UWCs?

While the Frameworks do not impose or prescribe the actions and strategies of Local UWCs, if we are to collectively advance our work across the country and address the needs of our stakeholders, including our community members, donors, partners and volunteers, we do need to bring some consistency to the way we talk about the work we do and the impact we have in our communities. The Brand Frame and the focus area frameworks are built on an understanding of the work UWCs across this country are involved in. They address the commonalities in our work. While it is true that not all UWCs are advancing all of this work, it can be said that all UWCs are currently involved in at least some of what is articulated through the Focus Area Frameworks.

The expectation that is being placed on UWCs through this work is that collectively we start categorizing and communicating our work in similar ways. This will allow us to talk about the collective work we are doing as a community of UWCs to address the underlying causes of issues across the country. As we develop this shared vision and understanding, we can begin to make progress on more consistent data collection, shared learning and capacity building, and more aligned communication. This does not mean that we will be collectively measuring everything that we do, or that we can only be involved in the pieces that are being measured, but that we can start talking consistently and confidently about a variety of aspects of our work.

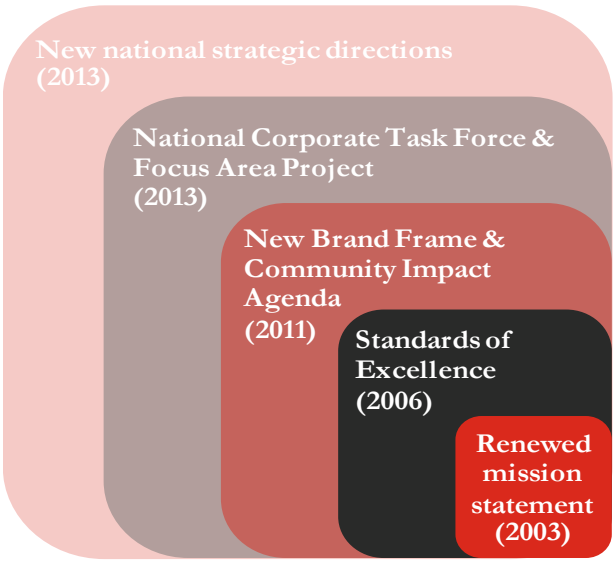
Connecting the Dots: 2003-2013

Our UWC Standards of Excellence call on UWCs to develop a shared community vision and action plans. A shared vision serves as the foundation for collective action and greater alignment of effort and resources. This direction applies equally to our work as a national community of UWCs.

The development of the Focus Area Frameworks builds on our collective work as a Movement to better understand and achieve our mission through the Standards of Excellence, our community impact strategies and Brand Framework.

The Frameworks build on this previous work and, in a more granular way, start to explain the common outcomes, the philosophy, and the approach that many UWCs are taking to achieve their community impact plans.

In order to fully understand the complexity of the work and the tools that are available through UWCC to help you in this journey, we have endeavored to make the connections throughout this User Guide to the preceding work including our Standards of Excellence and the Orientation to Community Impact modules, both of which can be found on the UWCC Members' Portal. We also encourage you to look to the Brand Frame document as well as the Change Starts Here: Strategic Directions for the United Way Movement document to see a more complete picture. This will provide you much of the information and tools you need to be able to begin or to continue this work in your community.


New national strategic directions (2013)
National Corporate Task Force & Focus Area Project (2013)
New Brand Frame & Community Impact Agenda (2011)
Standards of Excellence (2006)
Renewed mission statement (2003)

MILESTONES TOWARDS CREATING COLLECTIVE VALUE

Overview

As UWCs our mission is "***to improve lives and build community by engaging individuals and mobilizing collective action***". UWCs adopt a community building approach to improve community conditions and to create opportunities for a better life for everyone in our communities. Collectively our efforts are grounded in a set of guiding principles that ensure that we:

- Build on community strengths and assets
- Ensure that the community leads and drives solutions
- Support partnerships and collaborations – because no one individual or organization can do this alone
- Align our work at UWC to support the community impact goal
- Measure and report on progress

- Employ strategies that help to change the underlying causes of social issues

United Ways Centraides make an important contribution to community by:

- Setting priorities, goals and plans with the community;
- Partnering with community agencies and a broad range of sector;
- Aligning and mobilizing our organization's resources to achieve our goal; and,
- Measuring and communicating about changes in communities.

UWCs engage the community upfront in setting priorities, shared goals, and the steps needed to achieve them. We work with our local communities to develop plans, and define the role each community partner plays. Throughout this process, together we work to identify the changes we expect to see and that we will measure – the outcomes and indicators of our collective success. It is also necessary that we communicate the difference we're making in communities, using outcomes and indicators as concrete evidence.

Tools and Resources

- Aspiring to Excellence: Standards of Excellence, 2007
- Standards of Excellence Self-Assessment Guide 2007
- UWC Community Impact Modules 1 – 9, 2010
- UWC Brand Framework, 2011
- Poverty to Possibility Focus Area Framework, 2013
- Strong Communities Focus Areas Framework, 2013
- All that Kids can be Focus Area Framework, 2013
- Change Starts Here with Us: Strategic Directions for the UWC Movement, 2013

These resources and more can be found on the UWC Members' Portal: Podcast Centre – Orientation to Community Impact

Priority issues focus and provide direction for all elements of our work. Priority setting is the basis upon which a community can:

- define a shared vision and outcomes;
- identify the effort and activities required to achieve change;
- Mobilize people and resources;
- Make investment decisions; and
- Measure and communicate results

The UWC Standards of Excellence outline six critical standards of practice for UWCs seeking to engage and mobilize the community. They are:

- **Know Your Community:** on-going processes that develop an in-depth understanding of the community – its population, assets, and characteristics, and the dynamics that affect its development.
- **Engage with the Community:** identify, understand and inspire diverse individuals, groups and sectors to better understand and become involved in community issues. UWC brings together people whose paths do not usually cross and give voices to those who often go unheard.
- **Build a Shared Community Vision and Action Plan:** UWC works with the community to establish a shared vision and a plan to achieve that vision. UWC involves its partners in

developing the vision, identifying priority issues, developing and implementing impact strategies, and developing and mobilizing resources.

- **Build and Sustain Effective Relationships:** to create community change, UWC deliberately seeks out new voices and partners. UWC works to build effective relationships that are broad and diverse and focused on the priority issues.
- **Build Collaborations:** UWC is recognized for its skill in building collaborations.
- **Develop and Sustain Donor Relationships:** Create opportunity for donors to align their interest and capacity to invest in community impact strategies.

Having impact in our communities is about being able to understand our communities and its desires and hopes and then making strategic choices to help us act.

In order to help you incorporate these six practices in your work and to put strategic priorities into actions, this User Guide is designed as a reference guide to assist you as you create a community impact planning document that includes five key components:

- An Aspirational Goal
- An Outcome
- A Case for Action
- An Action Plan
- A Reflection & Reporting Plan

This Guide to Use provides suggestions about how to create each component, and explains how the Focus Area Frameworks can be useful along the way. It offers local examples and answers to frequently asked questions.

Many local UWCs create a companion document that explains how the community impact plan will inform community investment and collaborations with partners. It itemizes grant review procedures, timelines and reporting requirements. Marketing and resource development teams often create an operational strategy that explains how the community impact plans will be translated in messaging and inform communication with donors.

Understanding the Components

Component of a community impact plan	Example
1. An **aspirational goal** is a simple, positive plain language statement the expresses a hope for your community. It is the most concise and easily understood way of communicating the intended impact of your UWC.	"All That Kids Can Be"
2. An **outcome** is a specific type of change that you intend to achieve through your community impact work. Most impact models include a few high level collective or community outcomes as well as a number of more specific and concrete program outcomes.	Emotional & Physical Wellbeing • *Children and youth believe in themselves* • *Children and youth can better handle life's challenges*
3. A **case for action** clearly explains the need for action around each outcome, pulling together information from research literature, community consultations, local planning reports, and program evaluation reports.	Experts see mental illness as a key emerging public health issue for children. Preventative services are lacking on our city.
4. An **action plan** explains the actions your UWC is taking to make a measureable difference in the identified outcomes. Includes engaging & mobilizing, strengthening, influencing, and understanding.	We focus on counseling, mentorship, and leadership development.
5. A **reflection and reporting plan** explains how your UWC will know it has made a difference and how it will continue to learn and innovate.	We track the number of kids who have increased numbers of developmental assets and the number of kids who have connected with adult mentors.

1. Setting Your Aspirational Goal: The Community We Want

An aspirational goal is a simple, positive plain language statement the expresses a hope for your community. It is the most concise and easily understood way of communicating the intended impact of your UWC. Each of the three Focus Area Frameworks is built around a single aspirational goal, aligned with common outcomes used by UWCs.

The aspirational goal and aligned outcomes from the Poverty to Possibility Focus Area Framework serves as an illustration.

Aspiration Goal: **From Poverty to Possibility:**
Meeting basic human needs and move people out of poverty

Aligned Outcomes:

Housing Stability

- Individuals and families have access to emergency shelter
- Individuals and families access safe, affordable housing
- Individuals and families have the resources and supports to maintain safe and stable housing

Food Security

- Individuals and families access affordable, nutritious and appropriate food
- Individuals and families experience decreased stress and life disruptions due to food insecurity

Employment & Financial Security

- Individuals have family-sustaining, meaningful employment
- Individuals & families are financially stable and have supports and assets to avoid financial crisis

Individuals and families have access to affordable goods and services needed to support independence and stability

2. Choosing Key Outcomes: The Change We Can Make Together

Aspirational goals are by nature very broad. It is important for UWC to be clear about the specific, unique and important contribution it makes to the achievement of the aspirational goal. This helps to show that UWC investments, partnerships and actions are different from and complementary to those of other funders. In a community impact plan, these outcome statements are centrally important in making investment decisions, focusing and analyzing reports from funded agencies, and building compelling community impact messages for donors and other partners.

Many UWCs develop a small number of general, high-level, plain language outcomes as well as a larger number of more specific, concrete and precisely worded outcomes. This helps to show how different kinds of UWC investments and actions form a coherent strategy, and it also ensures that your UWC can communicate consistently to various audiences in appropriate levels of depth.

Using the Framework:

Each Focus Area Framework identifies three high-level outcome categories designed to be used in a consistent way across Canada. Each Framework also includes nine suggested outcomes within these three broad categories, and these ideas are a good starting point for the development of the outcomes section of your local community impact plan. They are based on outcomes that have frequently been identified by other Canadian UWCs, and so they tend to be a "good fit" for the kinds of roles UWCs play in a community.

Most local UWCs will be selective in choosing from this list, and develop a local community impact plan with a smaller number of outcomes. You may also find that you need to "unpack" some of the outcomes in the Framework into more specific and focused outcome statements that fit the local context and provide funded organizations and partners with a clearer sense of the ways in which they might document their particular contribution to the larger, shared outcome.

You will also need:

Local planning documents, needs assessment studies and report cards are very helpful sources of information about local social issues and needs. This information can often be translated into good ideas for outcome statements. Statistical reports from all levels of government, school boards, the police, hospitals and other major local institutions can also be helpful.

It is important to remember:

Many community planning documents include a list of local issues requiring attention. While your outcomes will certainly draw on these reports, it is important to remember that the outcomes in your community impact plan are not a comprehensive list of all of the changes that are needed in your community. They are a list of areas in which you have committed your UWC to making a meaningful and measurable contribution to community change.

It is also important to remember that the outcomes in a community impact plan are *collective* or community level outcomes. They are changes that require different kinds of effort by different groups, and so they are outcomes that no single organization or community service program can achieve alone.

It is important that the outcomes you use to build your community impact plan resonate with local donors and partners. The outcomes in a local community impact model should be compelling. They should speak to a change that is clearly needed in your community and seen to be important by donors, partners and community members. In the Poverty to Possibility Framework, one of the outcomes in the Employment and Financial Security category is "individuals have meaningful employment." This outcome might be more compelling in a community where unemployment rates are high but people are optimistic about future economic growth. It may be less compelling in a community with low levels of unemployment, or a community with persistent, chronic unemployment. It may take on a different kind of resonance in a community where many of those who struggle to find work are newcomers.

As you select your outcome statements, it is important to reach out to your community and seek their input and their endorsement. UWCs use a variety of methods, including town hall meetings, online surveys, needs assessment studies or focus groups for this purpose.

Stakeholder	How they Help	Challenges that may arise
Community	Providing direct input from community members, including actual perspectives from vulnerable populations. Provide insight into the actual aspirations of those in the community.	Ability to reach out to and engage community members directly. Focusing on aspirations of community versus problems
Funded organizations	Knowledge of unmet needs and emerging issues. Knowledge of what has worked in the past. Access to the perspectives of vulnerable people.	May have a vested interest in certain kinds of action.
UWC Volunteers	Knowledge of what resonates with donors and the general public	Limited knowledge of the complexities of social intervention.
Local researchers	Knowledge of local statistics and trends about social issues. Knowledge of best practices. Knowledge of evaluation methodology.	May push for very technical approaches to measurement that are time consuming and expensive. May have deep but narrow expertise. May slow down action planning because of concerns about academic rigor.
Other funders	Knowledge about UWC's unique niche Knowledge of local issues and unmet needs	Different use of jargon, different planning cycles, and hierarchical decision making processes
Donors	Knowledge of what resonates with donors and the general public	May have limited patience for in-depth discussion of social issues and outcomes.
Politicians and other community leaders	Knowledge of how to communicate with donors and the general public	May have their own agendas

A good local outcome statement:

- Aligns with the broad outcome categories in the Framework
- Identifies a clear change that is measurable at a community level and illustrates the distinct contribution of your UWC.
- Makes clear who is expected to experience change (for example: vulnerable seniors, people living in poverty, rural youth, all preschool children).
- Is drawn from strong evidence.
- Is achievable and realistic.
- Resonates with local community members; is seen as important, clear, achievable and necessary.

Tools and Resources

- UWC Community Impact Module 3: Setting Priorities, 2010
- UWC Community Impact Module 4: Engage and Mobilize the Community, 2010
- Community Conversation Workbook, Harwood Institute for Public Innovation in collaboration with United Way Worldwide
- Public Participation Toolbox, International Association for Public Participation, 2006

These resources and more can be found on the UWC Members portal: Podcast centre – Orientation to Community Impact

A good list of outcomes within a community impact plan:

- is short enough to make measurement and reporting on each outcome manageable.
- is short enough to make communication focused and manageable.
- identifies changes that UWC is well positioned to make in a selective way and is not a laundry list of all of the changes needed in the community.
- makes it clear that UWC is tackling the aspirational goal in different and complementary ways.
- includes both high-level outcome statements and more specific, concrete statements that make measurement easier and inform different kinds of action.
- is a good fit with your UWC's strengths and capabilities.
- is designed to evolve over time.

Here are the outcomes identified in the All that Kids Can Be Focus Area Framework:

Engagement in Learning	Connectedness & Community Involvement	Emotional & Physical Wellbeing
• Children and youth are ready to learn • Children and youth do well in school • Youth make a healthy transition into adulthood	• Children and youth care about and get along with others • Children and youth get involved • Children and youth take responsibility and lead	• Children and youth believe in themselves • Children and youth make healthy choices • Children and youth can better handle life's challenge

In Cambridge, Ontario, the local United Way chose to build its community impact plan for this focus area around two key outcomes, each of which was unpacked into a number of more specific outcomes

- *Helping Kids Belong*
- *Building Social and Emotional Skills*

In York Region, Ontario, the local United Way identified a total of 7 outcomes across all three focus areas. In an effort to keep the total number manageable, they merged similar outcomes from the All that Kids Can Be and Strong Communities focus areas. Their list of key outcomes included three that align with the list in the All that Kids Can Be Framework:

- *Children and youth do well in school and other learning environments*
- *Adults and youth get involved*
- *Individuals and families can better handle life's challenge*

Yeah, But:

See the Appendix for answers to these Frequently Asked Questions

- *How many outcomes should we pick?*
- *How do we know which outcomes are the most appropriate, or most evidence based? Who gets to decide?*
- *What if an important local outcome does not fit with the national list?*
- *What about outcomes forseniors, people with disabilities, aboriginal people, or recent immigrants for example?*
- *There are so many compelling social problems. Who are we to say that one is more important than another?*
- *We can't measure whether we have achieved such high-level outcomes, so why name them?*

3. Developing a Case for Action: Why We Need to Act

The case for action clearly explains the need for action around each outcome.

Ideally, the case pulls together information from the research literature, community consultations, local planning reports, and program evaluations. Where possible, the case for action also reviews the investments of other funders, the gaps in those investments and the areas where innovation is needed. However, many UWCs do not have the resources to undertake an intensive process like this on a regular basis. In these cases, the process of pulling together a case for action may focus on informal consultations with key local partners and/or drawing on existing local research.

Using the Framework:

The Frameworks make a case for action on each high level outcome, drawing on well-known national research. The Frameworks also include sample statistics that may be helpful in building a compelling case for action. Although the statistics listed on the Framework are national, many of them have been broken down on the Statistics Canada website into small geographic areas, like regions or towns.

You will also need:

It is important that a local community impact plan draws on local information in order to make a case for action. This can be very simple. For example, it may involve quoting from local research reports produced by a municipal government or a health unit, or holding a small meeting with key partners to identify local issues.

Success

A good case for action persuades the reader that action is necessary and that UWC is the right organization to act. It resonates with a variety of audiences, including donors, partners, and local organizations. A good case for action is not an attempt to persuade the community about the value of the work UWC and its partners are already doing. It is a demonstration that the UWC is responding to a call from the community.

Real World Example

United Way of Calgary and Area recently summarized its case for action in their Case for Action "ALL IN" For Youth, September 2012 this way:

> *Together, we must increase the number of young people completing school and successfully transitioning into our workforce. Alberta has one of the lowest school completion rates in Canada, and at the same time, the highest demand for skilled workers in an expanding economy.*
>
> *Our current high school dropout rate is unacceptable and by no means inevitable. We have one of the best education systems in the world. We believe education is key to maximizing the potential of our city and its people.*
>
> *Calgary students are amongst the highest performing in the world in international testing and consistently outperform the province in provincial testing and yet every year, 3000 of them do not complete high school.*

Yeah, But:

See the Appendix for answers to these Frequently Asked Questions

- *I'm not a researcher or an expert on best practices and statistics. How do I make a compelling case?*
- *Do donors really care about all this stuff?*

4. Developing an Action Plan: We're Committed to Act and We've Got a Plan that Can Work

This section of an impact plan explains the actions UWC is taking to make a measureable difference in the identified outcomes. These actions should clearly differentiate UWC's role from the roles of others. The impact strategy highlights the full spectrum of UWC strategies:

- Engaging and mobilizing community (dollars, influence, time, knowledge)
- Strengthening the network of services and capacity of non-profits and community
- Influencing public attitudes, systems, and policy
- Understanding and addressing underlying causes

The Action Plan section focuses on what your UWC intends to do, and is therefore future-focused. However, this does not mean that all action plans call for bold, sweeping change in UWC investments. Some action plans focus on consolidating and strengthening good work that is already under way. Some aim for incremental change over time. Some focus on raising awareness about a misunderstood issue, without necessarily committing to attack that issue. Many action plans use a mix of these approaches, calling for bold new action in one or two areas while "staying the course" in others.

Most action plans review the work that your UWC is already doing. They incorporate a summary of existing UWC investments and partnerships that align with the identified outcomes.

The action plan also identifies areas where further action is needed and UWC intends to respond. They may highlight areas where UWC is well positioned to take on a leadership role in a completely new initiative (such as a neighbourhood strategy, for example). The plan may also highlight areas where UWC can do a better job documenting and disseminating the impact of the work it is already doing, or areas where the UWC should no longer invest. The plan may also identify areas where UWC might advocate for others to act, or pursue new kinds of resource development strategies so that it will be better able to act in the future.

Using the Framework:

The Focus Area Frameworks describe the four key brand strategies, and these descriptions may prompt you to consider options for action that are outside of UWC's traditional role. The Focus Area Frameworks also include tables that summarize types of action that are common in the UWC movement and linked to research about best practices. These ideas may be helpful in building a local

action plan. However, these tables are not comprehensive. There are many promising options for action not listed here.

The Frameworks may also be helpful in describing your action plan in a more focused, concrete way. For example, you may have a list of past investments that are designed to address poverty. Using the outcomes from the Framework, you may be able to highlight those investments aimed at helping people who are homeless and differentiate them from those investments designed to prevent homelessness by addressing underlying causes.

You will also need:

Consultation with partners is crucial when developing an action plan. It is the best way to manage expectations and to identify those ideas that have broadest support. If your action plan eventually includes a decision to change or discontinue funding for some initiatives, a strong consultation process will help to ensure that these decisions are made in the most transparent and evidence-based way.

A good action plan gives the reader clear, concrete and exciting ways to get involved in advancing the outcomes and achieving the aspirational goal. It helps stakeholders see their individual efforts as components of a coordinated plan, and it clarifies UWC expectations for grant recipients. The actions identified in a good action plan are actions capable of making a measurable difference in the key outcomes.

Yeah, But:

See the Appendix for answers to these Frequently Asked Questions

- *What's the point in having an action plan when our fundraising totals aren't going up year over year?*
- *What if our action plan suggests that we should stop funding certain programs? How do we handle that?*
- *What if partners or the public react negatively to our action plan? What if they see us as biased, or "choosing winners and losers?"*
- *How do we manage expectations? What if we identify a new action strategy and people assume that means we will be investing all kinds of new money?*
- *Why do we have to come up with new actions? The programs we have funded for years are still doing good work and deserve our support.*

5. Developing a Reflection and Reporting Plan: We Are Holding Ourselves Accountable

A community impact plan is designed to enable a UWC to make a measurable difference on specific outcomes. It is important that the plan include a clear explanation of how success will be defined, and how it will be measured. This component of the plan is important because it ensures accountability and transparency. It constitutes a commitment on the part of the UWC to monitor progress, share results, and adjust the strategy as needed.

Most plans draw on multiple lines of evidence. Community level statistics from the Canadian Census or other sources are used to track positive and negative trends through time in the key outcomes. Often, outcome measurement reports from funded programs and other UWC initiatives are used to show the specific contribution of UWC actions and investments. Stories, case studies, and examples are used to explain the meaning and personal significance of the achievements.

Using the Framework:

The Focus Area Frameworks do not offer much direct guidance around the development of monitoring and evaluation plans, because they are the first of a number of products that are planned as part of the larger focus area project. UWCC is in the process of exploring the idea of consistent national reporting systems improve communication on UWC community investments.

That said, the Frameworks do offer guidance about how to articulate outcomes clearly and how to draw clear connections between your action plan and your key outcomes. Together, these elements are often called a theory of change, and a theory of change is an important first step in developing a focused and useful plan for reflection and reporting.

There is growing recognition within UWCs that we need to improve our ability to reflect the scope of our work, both locally and across the country. We need to improve our ability to both demonstrate and communicate our impact. Our relationships with national and regional corporate partners serve as a practical illustration of this point. As documented by the National Corporation Partnership Task Force, our corporate partners are seeking to better understand the difference UWCs are making across the country through their corporate and employee contributions. Some of our partners are also seeking to align their support for UWC to their corporate social responsibility and employee engagement programs. The need for more consistent data and information about the work of UWCs across the country is a strategic imperative if UWCs are to maintain and grow these relationships, and engage Canadian and other partners more broadly in our mission.

Building on these Focus Area Frameworks, UWCC, in partnership with UWCs, will be developing a plan for more consistent collection and communication of consistent national data on the scope and impact of our work. Over time, this work is expected to include:

- **Essential Data:**
  - Annual scope of investment aligned to the three brand focus areas and common intervention strategies

- Annual scope of support provided beneficiaries – agencies, programs, individuals serviced aligned to the three brand focus areas and common intervention strategies

- **Common Indicators:**
  - A limited number of common community indicators that align with our focus area goals that UWCs will monitor and track across Canada

- **Performance Stories:**
  - Standard stories of change that articulate the scope of investment, partnerships and strategies designed to drive positive outcomes in communities across Canada.

Tools and Resources

- UWC Community Impact Module 8: Measure Outcomes, 2010
- UWC Community Impact Module 9: Communicate Outcomes, 2010

These resources and more can be found on the UWC Members portal: Podcast centre – Orientation to Community Impact

The first step in this process is expected to focus on collecting "Essential Data," building on the experience of an Essential Data Collection Pilot Project completed during the Spring 2013 in partnership with the National Corporate Partnership Task Force and a group of 22 UWCs.

It is important to remember:

A reflection and reporting plan is a shared responsibility. Organizations that receive grants from UWCs have some responsibility to demonstrate the impact of their work, but they should not be solely responsible for designing the systems and generating the information that will enable you to develop a culture of reflecting and reporting. As a UWC, you should be evaluating your own work, and working closely with others to design tools, gather data and present findings in a way that is engaging and meaningful.

Reflection and reporting is about more than the accumulation of data. It is also about interpreting that data together with partners, drawing insight, and using that insight to inform action. Many organizations put too much emphasis on creating systems to gather data, and not enough on drawing insight from the information they already have.

A good monitoring and evaluation plan:

- places very clear and realistic expectations on funded programs regarding what they are expected to measure and report;

- draws on evidence from multiple sources to gauge progress;
- draws on stories and examples as well as numbers;
- makes good use of data already collected before asking partners for new data; and
- Includes a clear process for analyzing and sharing information, and mechanisms to ensure that stakeholders have the opportunity to discuss what has been learned and how these insights should inform the ongoing development of the plan.

United Way of Cambridge and North Dumfries recently considered this issue in regard to their Poverty to Possibility impact plan. They viewed the following community level statistics as indicators of the current community condition and then sighted the program outcome statistics as examples of outcomes available from across individual programs:

Community indicators that establish current community condition:

- *13% of local residents live in poverty*
- *Single parent and newcomer families are at higher risk*
- *14,500 local residents find it hard to keep food on the table*
- *More than 2,500 residents with full time employment live below the poverty line*

Program outcome measures

- *80% of program participants manage everyday challenges better*
- *100% of participants meet their basic food needs*
- *72% of families feel that their housing situation is more stable*
- *90% of students have a transition plan towards education or more meaningful employment*

The next step for this UWC is measurement of common/shared outcomes across more than one program.

Yeah, But:

See the Appendix for answers to these Frequently Asked Questions

- *Don't we need an expensive database to do this kind of analysis?*
- *We don't have the training to develop good outcome measures.*
- *The agencies we fund are small and under-resourced, and so are we. Is the measurement work we do really going to convince anybody?*
- *Won't this lead to a dense, complicated report that no-one will read or understand?*

Frequently Asked Questions

Choosing Key Outcomes

How many outcomes should we pick?

Traditionally, UWCs have funded many different kinds of programs and addressed a variety of social issues. UWC has contributed to a large number of different kinds of outcomes. When developing a list of key outcomes for a community impact plan, a UWC inevitably faces the challenging question of how focused to become. A model focused around one or two very important and very specific outcomes is likely to generate meaningful change in those outcomes that can be easily measured. However, it may also alienate some donors and partners who don't share an interest in those outcomes. On the other hand, an impact plan that includes a long list of outcomes may have "something for everyone" but it is unlikely to generate a meaningful, measurable change anywhere. Finding the right balance isn't easy. Within an impact strategy focused on one of the three aspirational goals, most UWCs follow the general format of the Focus Area Frameworks in picking about 3 broad outcome categories and about 9 more specific outcomes.

How do we know which outcomes (or action ideas) are the most appropriate, or most evidence based? Who gets to decide?

In an ideal world, outcomes and actions would be selected through an intensive process of community consultation led by a skilled facilitator who could work through the inevitable conflicts and complexities. However, UWCs don't always have the time or the money for an intensive process like this. It can be difficult to design a cost-effective process that will lead to a credible plan. Some smaller UWCs have handled this challenge by focusing on one of the three focus areas at a time, over a period of several years. Others have chosen to develop plans focused on clarifying the outcomes of existing investments and improving their capacity to demonstrate impact. Whatever the approach, it is important to make sure that the outcomes you choose are vetted through some process of consultation with partners and community members.

What if an important local outcome does not fit with the national list?

Your local research and consultation may lead you to conclude that it is important for your local UWC to take action on an issue that does not appear in any of the three Focus Areas.

If this happens, there are several things you might do. It may be possible to "reframe" your local issue in a way that does align. For example, if your local stakeholders tell you should be focusing on gang violence, you may decide that the best way to come at this problem is through a focus on community engagement for youth. It is also possible that some of your local outcomes may fall outside those listed in the Frameworks. If this is what has been identified by your local community priority process, then that is okay.

What about outcomes that focus on systemic issues like racism or sexism?

The outcomes in the Focus Area Frameworks focus, for the most part, on changes in the lives of individual people. This may seem odd, given that UWC's four strategies emphasize the need to focus on underlying causes and attack systemic issues. The rationale for this choice was that person-level outcomes are good rallying points that can be linked to many different kinds of intervention including systems-change work. Typically, the end goal of an intervention designed to change public policy or alter the attitudes of the general public is to make life better for people who are vulnerable.

What about outcomes for seniors, people with disabilities, aboriginal people, or recent immigrants for example?

In our review of local planning documents from around the country, we found that many UWCs had developed outcomes focused on specific vulnerable populations. This approach tended to lead to a long list of outcomes even though the actual change desired for various populations was often very similar. For this reason, the focus area frameworks were deliberately designed around outcomes that could apply to a wide range of vulnerable populations. Our conclusion was that it made more sense to treat "what kind of change?" and "for who?" as separate questions.

There are so many compelling social problems. Who are we to say that one is more important than another?

It is true that there is a long list of social problems in most Canadian communities. It is also true that these problems are interconnected. It is difficult to talk about poverty without also considering food security, housing policy, immigration and school success. The outcomes that you choose to focus on in your plan are not simply those that are most important. They are the areas where you feel UWC has the best opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to change. If you think of social problems as a huge, tangled knots, your list of key outcomes are like the two or three areas where you have decided to begin working on the tangle.

We can't measure whether we have achieved such high-level outcomes, so why name them?

Complex social problems like homelessness or youth mental health change very slowly, and it is almost impossible to isolate the forces that move the needle in a positive direction or a negative direction. This is why it is so important to "unpack" your high-level key outcomes into more specific, measurable and controllable "sub-outcomes." By measuring progress on those, you are able to make the case that you are contributing to change in the larger, more important issue.

Developing a Case for Action

I'm not a researcher or an expert on best practices and statistics. How do I make a compelling case?

You might not be an academic expert, but you are likely an expert on your own community and on the issues that are of concern to local people. The Focus Area Frameworks can serve as the basis for engaging your community and looking to local sources of research.

Do donors really care about all this stuff?

Some do, and some don't. Increasingly, large corporate donors are asking for evidence of impact. New styles of fundraising that target younger donors and use social media rely heavily on evidence as

well. This doesn't mean that people are no longer interested in personal stories from program participants or from front-line staff.

Developing an Action Plan

What's the point in having an action plan when our fundraising totals aren't going up year over year?

An action plan should be strategic and viable within the local environment. If you expect campaign totals to remain fairly flat, you may choose an action plan that focuses on improving the quality and impact of existing programs or reallocating resources from one issue to another. Having a clear action plan that includes new ideas may also be a way to appeal to new donors.

What if our action plan suggests that we should stop funding certain programs? How do we handle that?

Discontinuing funding is always a very difficult decision, and it should be made with great care. If your UWC decides that this step is necessary, the process needs to be managed very carefully, and guidance about this process is outside the scope of this guide to use. An impact plan should make the rationale for the decision as transparent and evidence-based as possible. The consultations that often inform the creation of a plan can provide a forum for frank and open discussion about UWC priorities, so that organizations that don't align as strongly have time to consider their options.

What if partners or the public react negatively to our action plan? What if they see us as biased, or "choosing winners and losers?" How do we manage expectations? What if we identify a new action strategy and people assume that means we will be investing all kinds of new money?

An impact model is intended to make a compelling case for your action plan, based on input from community members as well as consideration of local research and national trends. If community members react negatively, it may be necessary to review your analysis. Sometimes, negative reactions have more to do with assumptions about how UWC intends to implement an action plan. If you can be as transparent as possible about how funding applications will be reviewed, when decisions will be made, and how much time organizations will have to respond, some of these fears may be reduced.

Why do we have to come up with new actions? The programs we have funded for years are still doing good work and deserve our support.

An impact model identifies local social issues that require attention. It foregrounds areas where new action is needed in order to create a sense of urgency, underscore the relevance of UWC's work and

attract new partners and supporters. These priorities are not created by your UWC in isolation, but agreed upon through consultation with various partners including local non-profit organizations.

Acting in new, more impactful ways does not necessarily mean investing in completely new programs or strategies and dropping programs that have worked for years. It may mean that the rationale for continuing to fund long-standing programs changes. Rather than funding them simply because you have always funded them, your impact plan may enable you to say that you are funding them because they have proven to be effective at contributing to the key outcomes identified in your model. It may be possible to help existing programs grow and innovate, re-tool some existing programs, or help them get better at measuring impact.

Developing a Reflection and Reporting Plan

Don't we need an expensive database to do this kind of analysis?

Several larger Canadian UWCs have begun to implement on-line systems designed to make data collection, reporting, and analysis less time consuming and more rigorous. Rolling out a system like this is expensive and time consuming. Although it is certainly a helpful tool, it isn't the place to start if you are new to outcome measurement. Creating a clear, focused and simple set of expectations for measurement, a solid, well defined set of key outcomes, and a few basic indicators to track should come first.

We don't have the training to develop good outcome measures. The agencies we fund are small and under-resourced, and so are we. Is the measurement work we do really going to convince anybody?

Outcome measurement and program evaluation are highly technical fields, and some people devote their entire careers to this kind of work. It isn't realistic to expect that people who run a UWC or a community agency will have the time to develop this level of expertise. Given this reality, some people wonder whether the kind of measurement that can be pulled together by people who are not experts will be credible enough to convince outsiders.

However, a community impact plan is not primarily a measurement exercise. It is primarily a communication and partnership building process, and measurement is important insofar as it informs that process. Data from many sources can be useful, and data that varies in quality and depth can be useful. When you share more information about your key outcomes, your action plan, and your measured results with community, your goal is not to present research that would be accepted for publication in an academic journal. Your goal is to let people know that you are working to hold yourself accountable by being transparent about the rationale for your actions and also about what happened as a result of your actions.

Won't this lead to a dense, complicated report that no-one will read or understand?

Outcomes measurement information can easily become dense and complex, especially when you are trying to pull together information from many different types of programs and organizations. This is one of the reasons why it is so important to devote time to discussion and reflection about what has been measured and what it means, before building messages for the broader community.

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